

**STATE OF HOMELESSNESS
IN
THE CITY OF BOSTON
WINTER 1989-90**



EMERGENCY SHELTER COMMISSION

ANN MAGUIRE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
REVEREND BERNARD MCLAUGHLIN, (CHAIR) CROSSROADS FAMILY SHELTER
RICHARD RING, PINE STREET INN
MICHAEL MCGUIRE, HOMELESS PERSON
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DAVID TRIETSCH, PUBLIC FACILITIES

MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS

ALLAN K. STERN, DIRECTOR

Introduction

For the past four years, Boston has overcome many obstacles to fulfill its commitment of a warm bed, a hot meal, quality health care and transportation to shelter every homeless person in need. However, the current state budget crisis hits the most needy so hard that this challenge has become most formidable.

The Metro-Boston region of the Department of Mental Health has sustained almost \$10,000,000 in funding cuts at a time when the shelter providers are concerned with the increasing number of homeless people with severe mental problems.

"The cuts in the Department of Mental Health budget will have a devastating effect on mentally ill people and will undoubtedly cause more of them to become homeless. Shelters which are already overburdened will become unsafe and chaotic, forcing some homeless people to instead choose the streets."

Richard Ring
Pine Street Inn

The Homeless mentally ill people who wander the streets of Boston by day and sleep in our shelters at night are a tragic reminder of the failed policy of deinstitutionalization and the current lack of quality mental health care and treatment for drug abuse.

"More than half of the 520 homeless people that stay at Long Island and Boston City Hospital are overwhelmed with mental health problems that cannot be adequately treated in emergency shelters. Individual providers agree that 50-60% of the men and 90% of the women have mental health problems"

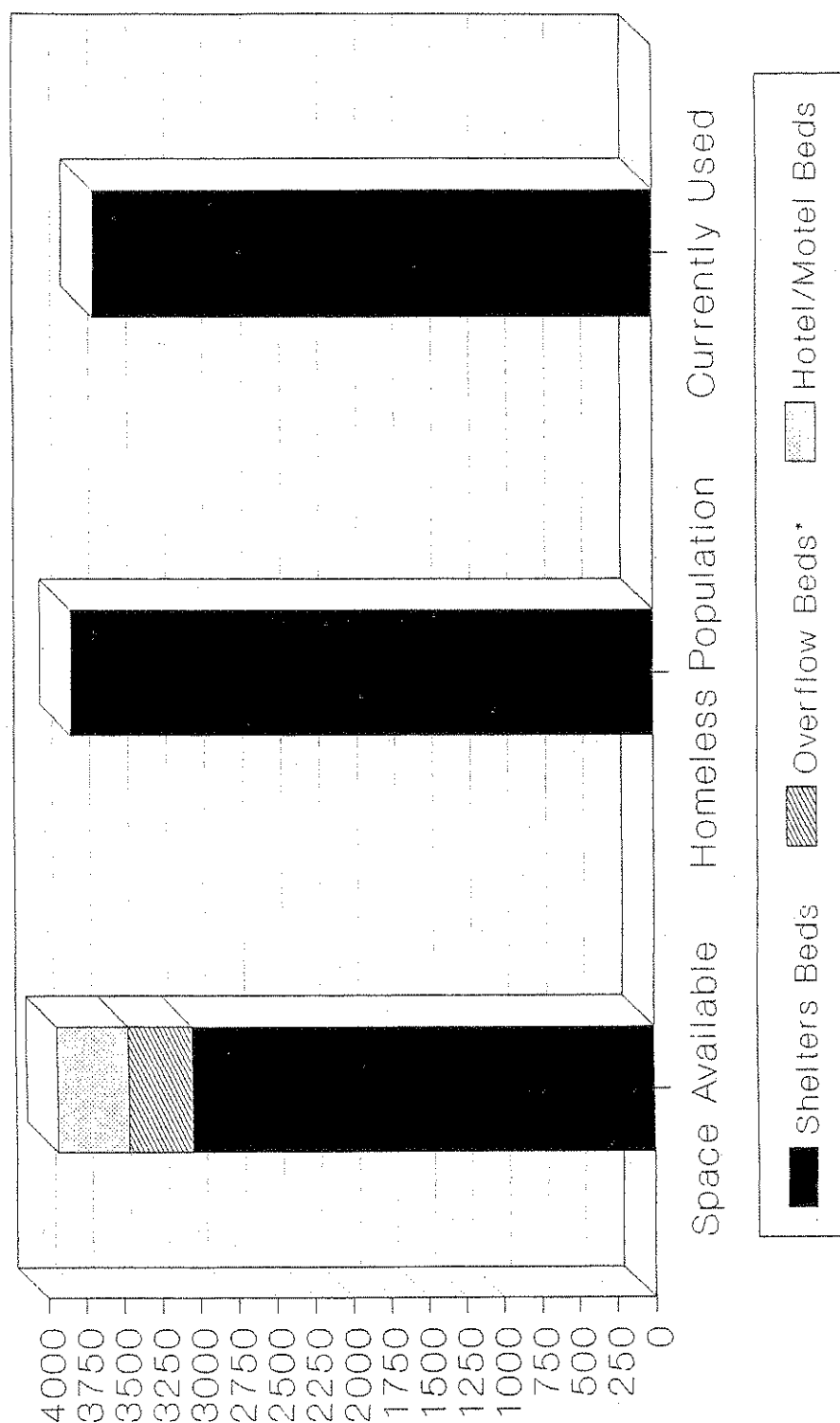
**Richard Weintraub
Long Island Shelter**

"We have observed incidents of increased substance abuse in our various outreach and shelter programs among homeless adults. This is particularly true among the younger homeless population."

**James Viola
Exec. Director, Positive Lifestyles**

ARE NEEDS BEING MET ?

Available Space vs. Requirement



This Years Census

HISTORY

This first census of Boston's homeless population was conducted in 1983 by six volunteers working over a period of two weeks. The study was the city's first attempt to identify the size of the street problem associated with homelessness. Flawed by it's design, the count was not particularly accurate but it's purpose was correct and as a result it inspired later projects which provided a clearer picture of the scope of the homeless population in the City of Boston. This year's the study has grown to include over one hundred volunteers working with the coordinated efforts of a dozen government agencies and dozens of non-profit service organizations.

Mayor Flynn has directed appropriate city agencies and sought help from outside service providers to conduct the census for the last four years. He has stated that the importance of the study should not be diminished by time and as a result, the city will continue to conduct it annually.

PURPOSE

It is the experience of many expert observers that government agencies are rarely prepared to address important service delivery matters when they are not aware of the scope of the problems they are confronting. The homeless problem is one such issue. Prior to conducting our first study, some estimates varied by as much as ten thousand people. With these "guesses" the city could not adequately prepare for the necessary shelter space, medical attention, food and transportation resources for the homeless population within it's borders.

Since the census' inception, Mayor Flynn has made a commitment that no individual in the City of Boston will go without a bed in a warm place, food and quality medical care

METHODOLOGY

The Shelter Population

Approximately one month prior to the actual census taking, Boston's Emergency Shelter Commission mailed an advisory to all of the city's public and private shelter providers to inform them of the study. These letters were succeeded by follow-up telephone calls. They are told which day the census will be taken (a day expected to be cold enough for those homeless to seek refuge in a shelter,) how the survey will be conducted and request volunteers. They are asked to tabulate the population of the shelter on the night of the count. The City's Emergency Shelter Commission telephones each shelter on the day following the count to calculate the total from the previous night/morning.

The Street Population

The City is divided into thirty eight separate entities for the purpose of the census. The areas are created as such so that they are small enough to be thoroughly covered by foot. To ensure that the volunteers have a list of possible "homeless places to stay" in each area, a questionnaire is distributed in advance to a variety of resources including , but not limited to neighborhood representatives, individuals who work with the homeless, etc.. These people provide the city with crucial information which identify specific areas where homeless people have been known to frequent. These designations can be as large as the end of a subway station or as small as under a box in an alley. The City makes sure that all of these identifiable areas are closely monitored during the evening.

The only exception to the strategy identified above is that some of the teams travel by car. These are areas of the city where there have historically been few homeless individuals identified or where walking is virtually impossible (like large residential neighborhoods like West Roxbury.) In such cases, volunteers get out of their vehicle and conduct the census by foot in business communities which have a higher likelihood of homeless individuals.

All walking teams receive Walkie-Talkies to facilitate communication during the evening. This is required to guarantee the volunteers safety and to call in for shelter pick-ups for homeless individuals unaware of transportation pick-up locations throughout the city.

The Volunteers

Volunteers are recruited from the various shelters throughout the city and city employees who work with the homeless routinely. This is an important element of the process because people who work with this population can help us avoid stereotyping which is often associated with homelessness. Volunteers usually work about two hours in the early morning. We conduct the study at this time in order to ensure that businesses or other places of temporary refuge (like the MBTA) are closed. Also, the study is conducted early in the week, as there seems to be less foot traffic at this time.

Volunteers are always asked to wear warm clothing inasmuch as the time of the census is selected based on the belief that it will be cold enough to identify the population that is exposed to the elements and readily in need of temporary shelter. This year the temperature dropped well below freezing.

Volunteers are asked to denote people by the following identifiable factors:

1. Is the individual definitely or possibly homeless ?

People who have a place to go often appear to.
If it is unclear in specific situations, volunteers are asked to record these individuals as "possible."
The city includes people listed as "possible" in the count presented in this document.

2. Is the individual a man, woman or child ?

Since gender and age difference often require different services, this observation is important.

3. Is the individual in need of medical attention ?

Boston City Hospital provides service to indigent patients as a matter of course.

4. Does the individual need transportation to shelter ?

While vans comb the city at night, some individuals may be unable to find a ride or may be unaware of these services.

Volunteers are requested not to ask individuals anything other than the questions raised above. It is not the city's intent to violate anyone's right to privacy. Our expressed purpose is simply to determine the size of the homeless population in Boston. As a result, this study is conducted with complete anonymity.

THE POPULATION OF THE STREET

Street count	Winter 1988-89			Winter 1989-90		
	Male	Female	Children	Male	Female	Children
Street count	145	29		128	29	
TOTALS	145	29		128	29	

There were one hundred and fifty seven individuals found on the streets of Boston on the night of December 18th 1989. This count is a slight decrease from the one hundred and seventy four individuals counted in December of last year. Obviously the street population is a mobile one, and while all steps were taken to limit double counting, there may be some inherent error factor associated with counting this particular population. Of course at two o'clock in the morning there are few, if any, individuals on the street at all. Therefore any potential implied or real error associated with the street count is invariably small.

The fluctuation of the homeless population from the streets to available shelters is closely associated with weather. As stated previously, the weather on the evening of the count was extremely cold, and had been so for approximately one month. Last year the study was conducted on the first cold night of the winter. Warmer nights would naturally result in a larger street and smaller shelter population. In 1986 we conducted the study twice due to the unseasonably warm weather that evening. As expected, the street population swelled by approximately five times on the evening of the count.

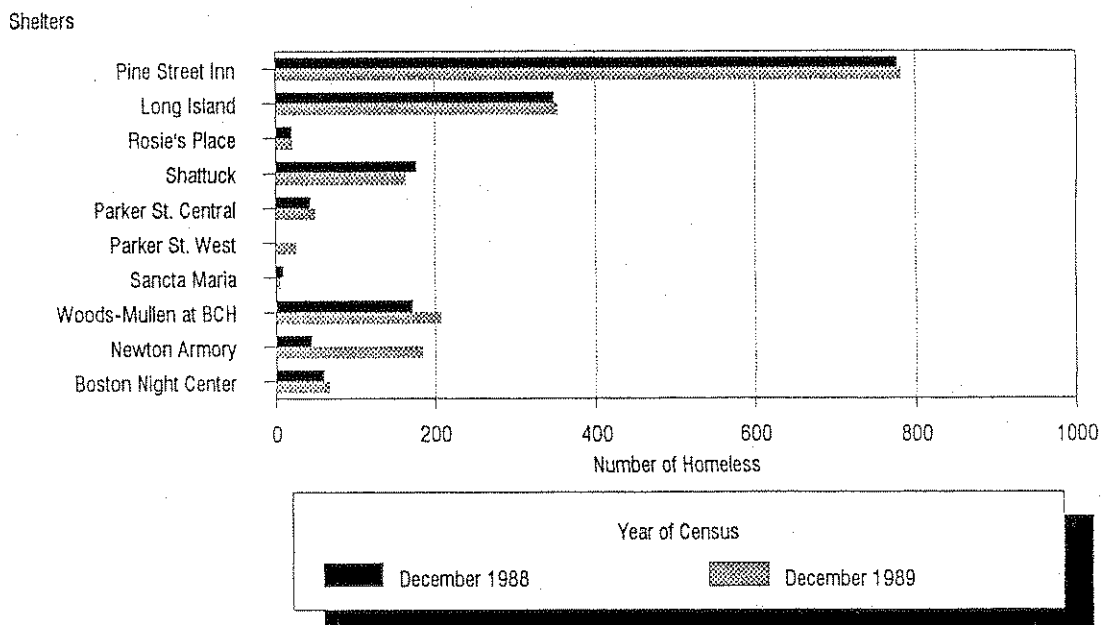
We were pleased that no children were identified as homeless during the street count. But twenty nine or 18.5 percent of the street population were women.

ADULT SHELTERS

	Winter 1988-89		Winter 1989-90	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Pine Street Inn	657	121	675	107
Long Island	309	40	298	55
Parker St. West			14	11
Parker St. Central	29	15	30	20
Rosie's Place		20		20
Shattuck Shelter	155	23	146	18
Harbor Light	25	4	*	*
Boston Night Center	51	9	58	9
Sancta Maria		10		5
Woods-Mullen at BCH	119	54	148	60
Positive Lifestyles Newton *	45		184	
TOTALS:	1390	296	1553	305

The overflow shelters at the Newton Armory, (*) which has been relocated from the Braintree Armory, and smaller locations had only been open since December 1st, and the Woods-Mullen Shelter at Boston City Hospital had only been opened for five weeks prior to the city's census count. As a result the number of individuals in these facilities can be expected to increase based on the awareness among the homeless population of the shelters as well as the transportation availability to these sites.

* closed for renovations



TRANSITIONAL SHELTERS

	Winter 1988-89			Winter 1989-90		
	Male	Female	Children	Male	Female	Children
Horizons House		5	9		6	12
Family House	6	6		17	16	
Shattuck Transitional				12		
Kingston House	20	8		13	6	
Women, Inc		25	10		22	9
TOTALS	26	44	19	42	50	21

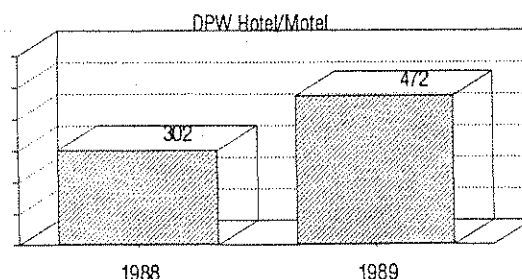
Family House now has two locations.

OTHER

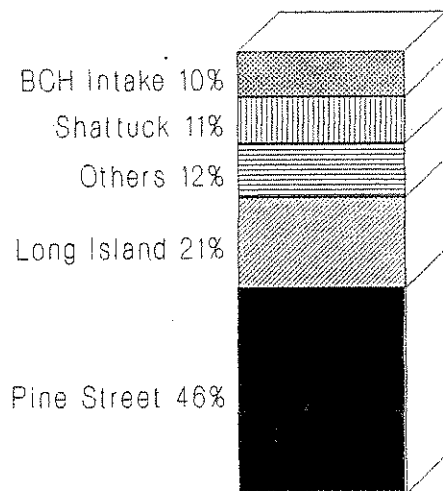
	Winter 1988-89			Winter 1989-90		
	Male	Female	Children	Male	Female	Children
Pilgrim Theater	65			25		
DPW Hotel/Motel	11	103	188	16	208	248
TOTALS:	76	103	188	41	208	248

472

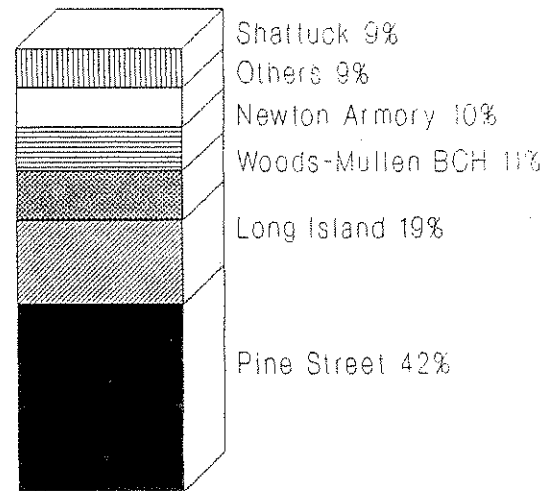
As the weather becomes colder, awareness of shelter availability increases. Last years census was conducted on the first cold night of the winter season, which accounts for the high number of homeless who sought refuge in the Pilgrim theatre. Since this years census was conducted after an extended cold period , many homeless moved to adult shelters, which accounts for the numbers of people at the adult shelters.



The Pine Street Inn's 782 people account for almost half (46%) of those counted in adult shelters in the city. This year, as part of the Winter Plan, Positive Lifestyles is operating the Newton Armory and other smaller shelters in the Greater Boston Area.



Winter 1988-89



Winter 1989-90

FAMILY SHELTERS

	Winter 1988-89			Winter 1989-90		
	Male	Female	Children	Male	Female	Children
Boston Family Shelter		10	18	1	10	17
Bostonian Chamber		24	36		24	35
Crossroads	2	10	21	2	10	18
Temporary Home		16	19		8	23
Project Hope		8	12		7	11
Roxbury Corps	1	5	12		4	11
Sojourner House	2	4	11	2	4	13
FIT		22	54		22	37
St. Andrews Shelter	1	6	12		7	13
St. Ambrose Shelter				1	11	15
Lifeshouse	1	5	5		10	19
St. Mary's Home					14	
Crittendon-Hastings House					14	6
TOTALS	7	110	200	6	145	218

In 1989, the largest growth in shelter beds other than overflow shelters was among family shelters. Specifically, as you can see by the chart on the previous page, the increase in occupancy of Lifehouse is related to the development of an additional shelter.

Since there were no observations of homeless children on the street, we assume that the children have been cited in either permanent housing (BHA) or at other shelter categories listed later like "Women in Crisis" shelters.

DETOX

	<i>Winter 1988-89</i>		<i>Winter 1989-90</i>	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Boston Alcohol	42	3	37	13
River Street	8	2	10	4
Andrew House	16		15	3
Dimock Detox	7	2	10	10
STAIR	27	4	31	5
Bridgewater	118		90	
Tewksbury	49		44	
TOTALS	267	11	237	35

HOSPITALS

	<i>Winter 1988-89</i>		<i>Winter 1989-90</i>	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Boston City Hospital	4		11	1
Massachusetts General	1		1	
	<hr/>		<hr/>	
	5		12	1

While other provisions for shelter space in the hospital community appear in other sections, this count identifies the size of the homeless population seeking medical treatment on the evening of the count.

ADOLESCENT SHELTER

	<i>Winter 1988-89</i>		<i>Winter 1989-90</i>	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Bridge	14	10	2	1
Place Runaway	3	5	3	4
Boston Adolescent	4	4	4	4
	<hr/>		<hr/>	
TOTALS	21	19	9	9

The number of youth has decreased because of the opening of the new Bridge Elliot Complex, a transitional housing program, currently sheltering eight men and eight women.

WOMEN IN CRISIS

	<i>Winter 1988-89</i>		<i>Winter 1989-90</i>	
	<i>Female</i>	<i>Children</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Children</i>
Case Myrna House (includes all four programs)	32	62	32	27
FINEX	7	11	11	15
Harbor Me	2	2	7	4
Renewal House	6	12	7	12
Elizabeth Stone House	23	27	14	11
TOTALS:	70	114	71	69

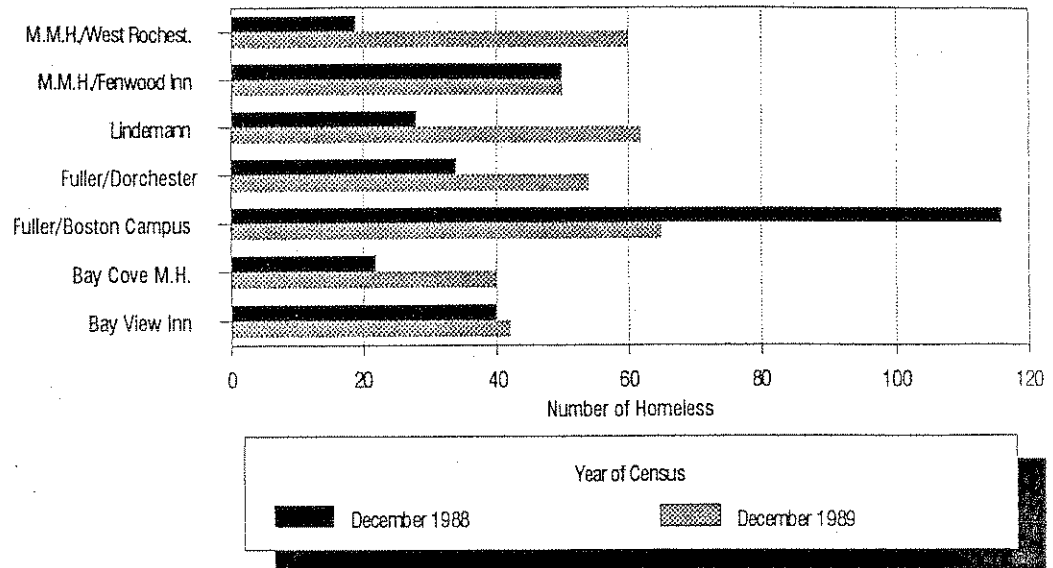
The marked decrease in the Elizabeth Stone House is attributed to the transition of several large families to permanent housing the previous week. In addition, the decrease in the number of children at Casa Myrna is due to renovation of the large family shelter areas. During the renovation only single women are staying there.

MENTAL HEALTH FACILITIES

	<i>Winter 1988-89</i>		<i>Winter 1989-90</i>	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Mass. Mental Health/ Fenwood Inn	34	16	35	15
West Rochester	10	9	42	18
Lindemann	17	11	43	19
Solomon Carter Fuller/ Dorchester	23	11	36	18
Boston Campus	85	31	45	20
Bay Cove M. H.	18	4	28	12
Bay View Inn	26	14	32	10
TOTALS:	213	96	261	112

- o West Rochester has now merged with Mass. Mental Health.
- o Dorchester and Fuller Inn are now part of Solomon Carter Fuller Mental Health Care.
- o Fuller Inn is now named the Boston Campus.

Shelters



Source: Emergency Shelter Comm., MIS

As stated in most studies of homelessness, one of the chief reasons for the problem is deinstitutionalization. While many who are homeless go untreated and live outside the institution over 373 were being treated in mental health facilities at the time of the count. Many of the adult shelters discussed previously shelter deinstitutionalized patients.

TOTALS

	Winter 1988-89			Winter 1989-90		
	Male	Female	Children	Male	Female	Children
Street Count	145	29		128	29	
Adult Shelters	1390	296		1553	305	
Family Shelters	7	110	200	6	145	218
Detox	267	15		237	55	
Hospitals	5			12	1	
Adolescent Shelter	21	19		9	9	
Women In Crisis		70	114		71	69
Mental Health Facilities	213	96		261	112	
Transitional Shelter	26	44	19	42	50	21
Other	76	103	188	41	208	248
Totals	2150	782	521	2289	985	556
Grand Totals		3453				3830

157
1698
369
292
13
18
140
373
113

We would like to thank the following people for their help on this year's census:

Tammy Gooler
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